



STATE OF IOWA

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DRUG ENDANGERED CHILDREN PROGRAM (DEC)

Children who live in, or visit, homes where methamphetamine manufacture or use is taking place face acute health and safety risks including physical, emotional, or sexual abuse; fire and explosions; and medical neglect. Collaboration among providers is critical to ensure the adequate protection and care of children found in these environments.

What is DEC?

A multi-disciplinary partnership involving:

- Law Enforcement – state and local
- Human Services
- Prosecution
- Medical Community
- Substance Abuse Treatment

DEC involves the development of a collaborative, coordinated response to drug affected children, including:

- Joint protocol and procedures
- Training for participating staff

Why do we need DEC?

- Children in these environments are especially at risk due to:
 - Behaviors that lead to increased exposure - crawling & hand to mouth
 - High metabolic rate
 - Immature organ systems
 - Weaker immune system
- In 2002 there were 19,539 reports of child abuse – 9,836 confirmed (77% were 0-11 years old)
- In SFY 2002 there were 520 founded child abuse cases due to parents manufacturing meth or possessing precursors
- High % of child protection cases are drug related – some studies report over 90%
- In a California study, children in a “meth oriented” dwelling were:
 - 30% sexually abused
 - 28% physically abused
 - 35% tested positive for heavy metals
 - 30% tested positive for methamphetamine
 - 90% were already in the system for drugs, truancy, or abuse/neglect

- 1,009 meth labs reported in Iowa in 2002 and in 2001 there were 606 arrests for methamphetamine manufacture or distribution and 1320 arrests for meth possession and use
- Treatment admissions for illicit drugs continue to increase – large % referred from the criminal justice system to Human Services

Exposure to methamphetamine is often associated with:

- Family violence
- Emotional abuse
- Neglect
- Criminal behavior
- Exposure to toxic chemicals
- Dysfunctional care-giving

Exposure to methamphetamine also poses multiple dangers, including:

- Injury or death from fire or explosions
- Risk of poisoning and intoxication
- Risk of acute health problems
- Risk of long-term health outcomes
- Developmental, emotional, mental health, or behavior problems

How DEC typically works in a community?

- Drug warrant is issued
- DEC law enforcement officer (DEC officer) is assigned to a child welfare role
- DEC officer contacts DHS worker on call
- DEC officer conducts a child endangerment investigation
- In consultation with DHS, the DEC officer makes the decision to remove the child or children from the home
- DHS worker determines the need for medical testing and initiates Child In Need of Assistance (CINA) procedures
- Case is referred to the County Attorney

Expected outcomes of DEC

- Greater understanding of the impact of methamphetamine manufacture and exposure on children
 - Cross training of disciplines involved with drug affected families
 - Media coverage raises awareness of the problem
- Enhancement of efforts resulting from collaboration between DHS and law enforcement
- Incentive for drug involved parents to seek meaningful drug treatment
- Early intervention with drug affected families
- Medical attention for exposed children
- Enforcement sends a powerful message to drug involved parents
- Removal of children from drug environments
- Interruption of the addiction cycle with possible treatment or referral to drug court
- Helps the public and policy makers see the CHILD in the methamphetamine problem